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PHŒNICES, NECHONIS JUSSU. AFRICAM CIRCUMNAVIGANTES.

CARMEN LATINUM

IN THEATRO SHELDONIANO RECITATUM

DIE JUNII XXIV MDCCCXLVI.

4

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PHŒNICES, NECHONIS JUSSU. AFRICAM CIRCUMNAVIGANTES.

We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.
Coleridge's Ancient Mariner.

AFRICA porrectum quo sidere terminet orbem
Oceanique amnes, terrarum extrema, reflectat,
Scire Necho, rerumque ardet penetrare tenebras.
Nec mora: compactæ naves: veniuntque vocati,
Mos quibus ignotas invisere puppibus undas,
Perque triumphatos virtutem extendere fluctus:
Ac simul Autumnus[a] ducebat plenior annum,
Admonuit sperata dies contendere in altum,
Et fatis dare vela: ferunt sua flamina classem.

[a] According to Rennell, the expedition would sail towards the end of the year. The first resting place would be on the southern part of the east coast. The second would be near the mouth of the Niger: and it would return to Egypt in the middle of the third year.

Littus Erythræum, positasque in rupibus urbes,
Et portus, loca nota, legunt. Arabumque per oras
Mollia prætereunt halantes thura recessus;
Eminus impendent post flavos nubila colles
Myrrhea, tellurisque sinum, sylvasque natantes,
Et mare divino fluitantia rore vaporant.
Itur continuò scopulorum immania terga
Prætentasque inter syrtes, dum littus inhorret
Arctius, angustoque rigent in limine fauces
Difficiles, dictæque olim cognomine Diræ[b].
Dî favere tamen: jamque illi largius æquor
Et dubiam[b] invadunt proris fatalibus undam.
Plurimus inde dies sequitur neque marmoris unquam
Cærulei species variata, aut aeris alti;
Vix super obscurum pelagus, per candida longè
Littora conspiciunt informia tecta, domosque
Æthiopum, clarisque micantes fluctibus umbras.
At subito cœli leges sensere refixas,
Et nova fœderibus succedere sæcula ruptis
Infandum—tacito palantia sidera nisu
Solennes mutare choros, neque tramite currus
Flectere sol noto: quin seræ ubi conditus olim
Decessit nocti, freta conserit igne recenti—
Tota simul cœli species invertitur, umbras,
Obliqui quoties densantur luminis ictu,
In latus Austrinum formæ rerumque hominumque

[b] Babel-mandel.

Conjiciunt—Illi multa obstupuere gementes,
Multa reformidant, ne cœli signa ferantur
Orbe alio, veteremque fidem perjura novarint.
Talibus auspiciis suspecta per æquora classis
Fert hyemem, quam longa, adversaturque periclis,
Longius emensura viam, nisi tempore multo
Deficerent farra in tardos exhausta labores:
Avertant pelago proras, et littore sicco
Consistunt: summâ naves religantur arenâ.
Nec certos petiere Lares: ubi dædala tellus
Invitat, posuere domos, camposque silentes
Perfringunt, ferroque nitentia jugera signant.
Undique præcingens tenebroso limite claudit
Silva locum: hìc fœtus Natura enixa superbit
Immensos: foliisque virent majoribus umbræ,
Grassanturque inter latebras procera ferarum
Corpora, sublimes tenui cervice cameli,
Cornigerique sues, hirsutaque sæcla leonum.
Inde diu expectata seges: ter fluxa vicissim
Cornua luna cavat, ter plenum accrescit in orbem.
Suave erat interea securâ in pace repostis
Mugitus audire undæ, æquatumque sonorem
Assidui fluctus, fractosque ad littora planctus.
Suave ita sub somnis in dulcia limina ferri
Inque domos, vocesque procul captare suorum,
Dum lentâ, lugubre sonans, mare constrepit undâ
Et querulas saxis voces illidit acutis.
Quale quis aeriis tendens sub vespere sylvis

Mœstius audierit venti increbescere murmur,
Et cœli propiora allabi numina credat.
  Et jam maturis se frugibus induit æstas,
Et frumenta diu sub sole excocta potenti
Expectant falcem: Per agrum collecta juventus
Nititur, et gelidâ raptim succiditur horâ
Flava Ceres, cum jam ridentibus obtulit arvis
Hesperus os placidum—Læti componere curant
Aggestas segetes, sollennique ordine pompæ
Ad mare deducunt messem, stipantque carinis.
Mox socias mœsti sedes et amabile linquunt
Hospitium, similes avibus, quibus imperat annus
Frigidus exsilio parvos mutare penates.
  Jamque instare viæ sinit indulgentia cœli
Otia per, placidosque dies—sub solibus æquis
Leniter impellunt maria exultantia venti[c],
Sidera nec pluvios meditantur pallida rores.
Classis item (neque enim ventus certissimus unquam
Vertitur adversoque ruens e cardine tardat)
Labitur, haud invita, natatque simillima nubi,
Quæ lentè æstivum tranaverit aurea cœlum.
Tempore non illo sulcos versare sonantes
Remigio nautæ assuescunt: ingloria ponunt
Arma, deo tantùm confisi; et corda trahuntur
Dulce per augurium: nec saltem credere possunt
Quin jam deducant magnum ver illud in orbem

[c] The Trade Winds.

Alcyones, cupidis innixæ fluctibus: illæ
Ante volant certè, et præspergunt marmora ponti
Deliciis: venti exoptant æquare sequendo.
Sic iter accelerat præsens fortuna laborum,
Ocyus heu quantum mutata! Angustior undas
Vexatas secat, et saxis longe ultima terræ
Meta riget: cursum flectendo vincere certant.
At venti transversa fremunt: ruit horridus imber,
Velleraque includunt nebularum tenuia pontum.
Intereà ingentes circumvolitare volucres,
Et veluti simulacra modis pallescere miris
Fluctivagæ, et jactare alas rumore sinistro.
Quin et inaccessi nimboso in vertice montis
Forma, humana parùm, sedet, aut sedisse videtur,
Scilicet ut præsens illas custodiat oras;
Cui caput horrendum nocturnis atrior umbris
Umbra tegit, tenebrisque procul duplicatur imago—
Obstupuere omnes, veriti ne pallida mortis
Regna adeant, latique premant confinia mundi
Dementes, ubi mox sine sole inamabilis horror
Obruat, et volitent exsanguia corpora circùm.
Eheu! quid memorem quæ mille pericula ponti
Pertulerint, cum jam, superato limite, tandem
Obvertant Boreali axi per cærula proram—
Longa hebetat sensim via fessas invia mentes;
Littora vasta legunt, et inhospita regna, plagasque

[d] The phosphoric brilliancy of the sea.

Sole putres: sylvæque supèr nigrantibus umbris
Continuæ exterrent: spes aurea deficit ægros.
Nec tamen interea pelagi spectacula magni
Nulla adsunt: noctu ardentes candescere tractus
Per[d] mare conspiciunt, et lucida terga supinat
Oceanus, splendetque in versicoloribus undis.
Nec[e] raro obscuris decurrunt montibus amnes
Ignivomi, flammisque (nefas) aqua plurima fluxit.
Quinetiam[f] noctu astrorum lunæque videtur
Pura acies, radiosque et non sua fulgura mittunt
Eminus, exæquatque diem lux æmula noctis.
Intereà exactis completur mensibus annus,
Admonuitque novæ sementi impendere curas.
Se[g] forte Oceanum fluvius volvebat ad altum
Decolor, et flavas late jactabat arenas
Ipse niger—Ripas et stagna udasque paludes
Arbor[h] inumbrabat, cui culmina flexa deorsum
Nutabant: demum sibi surculus, alter et idem,
Mox declinandum caput attollebat ad auras.
Huic subeunt luco, et læti placida æquora verrunt.
Pars inde infodiunt glebas, et semina sulcis

[e] This story is told of a later expedition, and has been supposed to have originated from a practice common among the natives of firing the grass along the river.

[f] The stars of the tropical regions are much more brilliant than our own.

[g] The Niger.

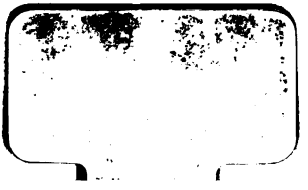
[h] The Mangrove.

Committunt, messemque ferentia sidera servant.
Pars autem exquirunt loti dulcissima poma,
Poma quibus largè securus defluit humor,
Inducitque avidæ lethea oblivia menti.
Illi[1] per virides herbas potantque jacentque
Infortunati; ventisque insomnia mandant
Luctisonis, aliasque putant se invisere sedes,
Muscus ubi, et somni, gelidæque in montibus auræ.
Oceanumque odere, et tædia longa viarum.
Interea obrepit tacito per tempora gressu
Annus agitque vices: et cœlo pronior æstas
Ingratos iterum cogit renovere meatus.
Ut tædet miseros duris incumbere remis,
Ut pluviis frontes rapidoque opponere soli,
Ægyptumque sequi fugientem erroribus ægris.
Mox loca prætereunt, tenues ubi visa per umbras
Littora purpureo funduntur lumine circum.
Nequidquam accessisse volunt. Nisi luce carentes
Nullos fata sinunt sedes lustrare beatas.
At montes aperire procul, fastigia quorum
Mille trahunt, nivibus suffulto sole, colores.
Hinc saltus pendent umbræque, et rura supinos
Lucida distinguunt colles; ubi ventus odores
Imbibit ambrosios: ductumque per æquora longè
Languescit varium melos, augeturque vicissim.

[1] The description of the Lotes Eaters is taken from the Poem of Tennyson.

Qualiter it, queruloque viam modulamine fallens
Fessus arundinibus summis interstrepit Eurus.
Protinus adverso voces e littore terræ
Audiri: voces liquidæ et suavissima verba:
Subducto numeros nectunt Seirenes ab antro
Ætherios: fugienda canunt maris æquore salsi,
Otia tuta canunt, lectosque irentis amœnè
Asphodeli, sociasque dapes, noctesque deorum,
Inde illi tenuere fugam, meliora secuti.
Continuo[k] rupes supereminet ardua: vertex
Aerius consurgit acuto murice: ad auras
Hinc flammæ erumpunt, et liquitur igneus humor.
Illi longè infra spectant miracula rerum,
Oceanumque vident cœlumque coloribus iisdem
Misceri, rutilique tremescere luminis haustu.
Scintillæque etiam noctis per aperta serena
Luce brevi splendent circum laquearia cœli,
Et nova sideribus succedunt sidera: at illos
Fata ferunt, ventique: juvat tamen ardua montis
Respicere, exstantesque infectis nubibus ignes.
Inter mille vices, inter portenta deorum
Inde iter absolvunt—Horrent procul ecce! columnæ
Herculis, et sectum metantur limite mundum:
His in marmoribus sese astra cadentia rorant,
His sol purpureis devexus conditur: illìc
Mille rates hominumque videt commercia pontus,

[k] The peak of Teneriffe—an exstinct volcano.

Ostia percurrunt velis Phœnices apertis;
Jamque suos soles iterum, sua sidera norunt,
Et redit in cœlum priscus color; albaque saxis
Tecta albis hominum illucent; in littore noto
Stant proræ, et rerum species se pristina reddit.
Nec secus in somnis mens ipsa est visa vagari,
Difficilemque sequi callem incomitata, neque ullam,
Multa per errores patiendo, accedere metam;
Dum jubar exorti colles geniale diei
Scandit, et implicitos solvit lux alma meatus.

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E COLL. BALL.